

A CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF ANGER: NEW TESTAMENT
PREACHING AS COUNSELING FROM
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
Mt. 5:21-6; 38-42

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ABSTRACT

This project is an indepth study of anger from both a New Testament and a modern psychological perspective. It falls under the rubric of preaching as counseling; the final context being that of a traditional sermon set in a worship experience.

The basic procedure was to begin with two New Testament texts that were understood to have some bearing on the problem of anger and to undertake an exegesis of them. This was followed by a discussion of several modern psychologists' analyses of the emotion of anger. The synthesis of these two perspectives culminated in a sermon which purports to give a Christian understanding and response to human anger. Because the New Testament texts are found in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, a general overview of the Sermon on the Mount was included which facilitated the exegetical process.

The rationale for this project lies partially in the need for expository preaching that actively engages modern, psychological understandings of the human emotions. Also, it lies partially in the need for ministers to broaden their perception of counseling to include the utilization of the pulpit. Finally, it lies in the recognition of anger as a human problem shared by all and which is personally destructive for many. It is hoped

that this project will give a Christian understanding of the dynamics of anger as well as propose a Christian response for handling it.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This project encompasses two of the areas of ministry which are the most exciting to me: counseling and Biblical preaching. In this introduction I want to outline my thesis proposal and state my area of focus.

The growth and scope of pastoral counseling is evident to anyone connected with either churches or seminaries in this country. One prominent psychologist, who has been responsible for much of the attempt to bring religion and psychology together, is Carl G. Jung. In a penetrating analysis of the human condition, he has written of the necessity for psychology and religion to work together to solve the spiritual problems of mankind.¹

Indeed, many pastors are quite gifted in counseling and many have worked hard to improve their ability to function as counselors. But, for some, this has not been enough. There has been a concern to focus on counseling problems from the pulpit. Edgar Jackson has heightened the importance of this endeavor by conducting a survey of four thousand laypersons who attended church regularly. They were asked what they wanted most from the sermons.

¹Carl G. Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1933), pp. 196-220.

About half...indicated a concern about intensely personal matters, such as the futility of life, insecurity in personal relations, a haunting sense of loneliness, ...a feeling of inferiority, the problem of suffering as well as the problems of illness, and feelings of guilt and frustration.²

My interest in this field really began with a study of the premier 'preacher-as-counselor', Harry Emerson Fosdick. He wrote that preaching and pastoral counseling are indispensable to one another.³ He also wrote that preaching should be involved with human problems.

Every sermon should have for its main business the head-on, constructive meeting of some problem which is puzzling minds, burdening consciences, distracting lives, and no sermon which so meets real human difficulty, with light to throw on it, can possibly be futile.⁴

Fosdick was preaching in a day when the great battles between liberals and conservatives were beginning to heat church pews everywhere. His objective was to rescue preaching from a dull, uninspired biblicism that destroyed many intelligent people's faith in the Bible. It is to Fosdick's credit that he accomplished his objective. But as I have taken his concept as my starting point it is imperative to note the dangers of Fosdick's style. Edmund Holt Linn has written a book describing in great detail the procedure of Fosdick in his 'human problem centered'

²Edgar Jackson, A Psychology for Preaching (New York: Channel Press, 1961), p. 75.

³Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Personal Counseling and Preaching," Pastoral Psychology, III(March 1952), 11.

⁴Ibid., p. 14.

preaching. The main point of contention for my purpose lies in the fact that Fosdick almost always began his sermon preparation by selecting some human problem and then he perused the Bible for specific texts which would throw light on the issues at hand.⁵ It must be mentioned that Fosdick probably did little to distort the meaning of the Biblical texts; however, this method is actually the reverse to my understanding of modern exegesis. The importance of this insight for my study cannot be minimized; it is going to dictate my procedure.

It is my opinion that good, solid Biblical preaching which is ever aware of the need for preaching on human problems can both cater to the needs that Fosdick so poignantly uncovered and, yet, stay true to the central message of a particular text.

The problem, then, for the preacher who wants to reach her/his congregation where they are hurting and yearning for help, is to develop a style of sermon preparation which will allow for both respectable exegesis and important, related, psychological insights. This project is an attempt to begin such a style of sermon preparation.

This idea has become more exciting to me as I have narrowed the focus of my concern. I have chosen my

⁵Edmund Holt Linn, Preaching as Counseling (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1966), pp. 54-55.

texts from the Sermon on the Mount, a piece of literature which has been studied throughout the ages by scholars and laity alike. In the past decade there has been a growing concern for Bible study in many churches around the country, and the New Testament--especially the Sermon on the Mount--is receiving a great deal of attention. Therefore, it is crucial for my ministry to be able to understand, exegete, and preach from the Sermon on the Mount.

Along with this there has been an ever-growing interest in psychology--much of it 'pop' psychology--which for some seems antithetical to Christianity. Coupled with my interest in counseling, this fact has led me to believe that the minister should be aware of the possible similarities between good psychology and competent Biblical scholarship. Conversely, it is just as important for the minister to know where psychology and certain Biblical truths differ--and in what way. This insight--the need for a proper understanding of the relationship between psychology and Biblical criticism--has encouraged me to undertake this study.

I have chosen the human problem of anger after much consideration of several possibilities. Part of the reason for this selection is the fact that, in Matthew, we have a teaching of Jesus concerning anger. Part of the reason is

more personal: I have been continually aware in my own ministry of the presence of anger in people today. Young people are teeming with resentment and hidden anger. Adults are struggling to 'control' themselves but many exhibit anger in some form or another. Moreover, I can sense in myself the results of anger--from school pressures, church pressures and societal pressures. Finally, as we look at our society it is not difficult to detect the manifestations of anger; violence is prevalent everywhere, families reveal angry parents and rebelling children. Anger is part of our modern society; it is here to stay. The need to come to grips with it, before it grips us, is most critical in the parish setting. For these reasons I have settled on the problem of anger as my focus of study.

It is important to state the assumptions from which I begin this project. First of all, I am assuming that there are at least a few counseling insights which are compatible with Christianity. I am not making any assumptions as to what they may be; this will be part of my project findings. However, I do assume that there does exist a compatibility between good, Biblical scholarship and respectable psychology.

I am also assuming that the New Testament passages will, in some manner, speak to the problem of anger. I am not assuming that all the verses will do so, only that

the main thrust of the passages in Matthew which I have selected will inform the problem of human anger.

A few definitions of rather common words might eliminate possible confusion. I refer to preaching as the sermon, set in the context of worship. I have already used psychology and counseling intermittingly as if they were synonymous. In a technical sense, of course, they are not synonymous. Yet, it is true that the skill of counseling draws its content from the body of knowledge known as psychology. Hence, the fact that I use these terms rather interchangeably should not become a point of confusion. Finally, I am using the term human problem to refer to individual, psychological, personality problems such as anger, guilt, frustration, loneliness, and so on.

My purpose in this project is to begin forming my own style of sermon preparation by an exegesis of Biblical passages and relating the findings to a human problem. I hope to develop my skill as a New Testament exegete and also gain an awareness of the avenues for possible interchange between psychology and Christianity. That is, I am intending to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the theory and practice of 'preaching as counseling.'

There are also a number of aspects which are not my concern here. I am not trying to prove that psychology

and the teachings of Jesus are identical, or are, on the whole, compatible. The burden of this project is not to try and show that psychology and Christianity are, at the deeper levels, searching after the same goals. Since I am not endeavoring to include a wide range of psychological literature I am limiting myself to a rather small volume of information, which may or may not be typical of mainstream psychological thought.

Similarly, I am not trying to demonstrate that one psychological system or any certain psychologist is especially amiable to Christianity. Nor am I trying to prove that any one exegetical method or scholar is particularly akin to the counseling field.

Also, I am not claiming an exhaustive approach to preaching on anger from these particular texts; I am only seeking one workable way--which can be utilized in a sermon.

Finally, this project does not intend to negate, nor emulate any preaching method--past or present--which has dealt with the same subject matter.

The methodology is as follows: first, I am going to make a general study of the Sermon on the Mount in order to understand better its nature and the problems involved; secondly, I will undertake an exegesis of Matthew 5:21-6, 38-42 and their parallels in Luke 12:58-9; and Luke 6:29-30, respectively, in order to draw some

conclusions as to how these passages inform the problem of anger; thirdly, I will include a shorter chapter surveying some of the literature on anger which may provide supportive insights for the exegesis; and discuss possible similarities in light of the exegetical findings; and finally, I will include a complete sermon based on the findings of this study--a sermon which I will plan on preaching in a local congregation at a later date.

CHAPTER II

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

In this section I want to indicate some of the major emphases in the study of the Sermon on the Mount (hereafter referred to by the initials SM) that have emerged in the last century. I do not intend to provide an extensive survey of all the important studies done on the SM, but rather clarify my own assumptions concerning the background and setting of the particular texts which are the main focus of this project. I am of the opinion that one cannot properly study any fragment of the SM without a sound understanding of the entire SM.

I have become aware, since beginning this inquiry, of the many volumes written on the SM. The opinions and discoveries seem equally prolific. The insight and new understanding I have gained from perusing the various works has been very fulfilling; yet, the tendency to elaborate on peripheral issues, in regard to my main subject, must be resisted.

One of the more recent and thorough examinations of the SM has been provided by W.D. Davies. In the introduction he surveys past attempts at dissecting the SM. One overall conclusion is essentially the same, although the approaches and interpretations are quite

different. The one conclusion that is virtually certain is stated by Davies:

The views propounded by scholars in our day about the contents and structure of Mt. v-vii seem to compel the conclusion that the whole section is merely a collection of unrelated sayings of diverse origins, a patchwork, which cannot possibly retain the pre-eminence once accorded to it as the authoritative source for the teaching of Jesus.¹

Beyond this statement there appears to be little agreement. I want to follow Davies' basic outline in noting three 'disciplines' which have been used extensively in trying to understand better the SM.

The first discipline is source-criticism which has greatly added to the overall impression of the SM as consisting of various documents. Davies² rightly cites Horace Marriott,³ as a good example of an in-depth study of the sources which may or may not have had a bearing on the SM as we know it today. While Davies assumes a rather dubious opinion towards the extent to which Marriott analyzes Matthew's use of Mark, Q, and M, I nonetheless found much of his work to be quite enlightening--especially in unravelling Q from Matthew and Luke.

¹W.D. Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 2.

³Horace Marriott, The Sermon on the Mount (New York: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 101-132, especially.

Benjamin W. Bacon, with great scrutiny, tried to analyze much of the input by source-criticism. What emerges is a very complicated picture of the make-up of the SM. For example, the Q source, which is commonly understood as a source behind both Matthew's and Luke's versions of the SM, is only a portion of a larger, perhaps older, source, designated S, which is, of course, not extant. All this is further complicated by the possibility of earlier redaction to S and further redaction by Matthew or Luke.⁴ This labyrinth of source analysis could easily lead to another discussion altogether. But Davies' point--and I think an important one--is that such an inquiry could obscure the need for properly understanding the texts we do possess. The value of source-criticism has been to show that behind the SM we have many documents which have to be considered before we can safely conclude we are studying the original words of Jesus.

A second discipline that has greatly influenced all Biblical studies--and particularly the Gospels--is form-criticism which "...has been concerned to examine the forms which the tradition about Jesus assumed in this period before it came to be recorded in writing."⁵ This

⁴Benjamin W. Bacon, Studies in Matthew (New York: Holt, 1930), appendix viii, pp. 505-510.

⁵Davies, p. 3.

discipline has led us to appreciate the impact of oral tradition as well as the influence of the early church on the Gospels. The greatest expositor of form-criticism, Rudolf Bultmann, has been extreme in his judgments concerning the extent to which the existing Gospels accurately portray what was actually said by Jesus as opposed to what the early church made him say.⁶

There is considerable agreement that Bultmann has gone too far, at least in many cases. Yet, the truth that form-criticism reveals cannot be minimized. Davies, himself, recognizes that much of the material we now have was conditioned and reorganized according to the church's needs. Joachim Jeremias, to whom I will shortly be turning, has followed the lead of C.H. Dodd and pointed out that much, if not all, of the SM was intended as early Christian teaching--didache--by the early church.⁷ But, as Martin Dibelius has written:

...we are not always in a position to decide whether these insertions are genuine words of Jesus or not... [he continues]...at any rate, I am not convinced that the meaning of Jesus' words, especially in the SM, was seriously falsified by such insertions, and the general impression made by our investigation of the tradition is a favorable one.⁸

⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York: Harper & Ros, 1963), pp. 96, 149, 346, as examples.

⁷ Joachim Jeremias, The Sermon on the Mount (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 20.

⁸ Martin Dibelius, The Sermon on the Mount (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), p. 43.

A more recent assessment of form-criticism is offered by Floyd Filson. While form-criticism rightly shows the importance of the early church "...it wrongly gives to pious but uncontrolled inventiveness complete dominance over historical memory. Such extreme views are unfounded."⁹

The third discipline that Davies mentions is the impact of "...the liturgical factors in the formation of the Gospel tradition."¹⁰ From this we can see that the early church, in forming certain sayings of Jesus for use in worship, would not concern itself with historical data; hence we have writings that present a flavor slanted toward liturgical themes.

To this discipline I would like to include literary-criticism. Floyd V. Filson has written concerning the poetic form which was used by early Christians for teaching and liturgical purposes.¹¹ There is also intense interest over the literary form employed by Matthew himself. Davies has scrutinized Bacon's thesis that the book of Matthew is divided into five sections which are meant to coincide with the Pentateuch. The eventual result of this thinking would

⁹Floyd V. Filson, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 7.

¹⁰Davies, p. 4.

¹¹Floyd V. Filson, "Broken Patterns in the Gospel of Matthew," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXV (September 1956), 227-231.

be to see Jesus as the 'New Moses' and the SM as the 'New Law.' The evidence for such a theme is quite involved and not crucial for my purposes here. Davies thinks it is possible to see such an underlying theme but hesitates pushing the parallel too far.¹² The more pertinent correlation of the SM as the 'New Law' will be further examined later; presently it is enough to note the influence of the author of Matthew on the entire thrust and concern of the book.

In the foregoing paragraphs I have not meant to minimize the importance of the various disciplines for each has brought valuable--if not monumental--changes in Biblical exegesis. The difficulty seems to arise when one discipline is emphasized to the exclusion of the others. We are in a better position today to evaluate objectively the contribution each type of criticism offers to Biblical studies.

I want to turn my attention to the question of the overall value and meaning of the SM. On this topic much has been written. I can scarcely hope to present an adequate summation; but I do want to mention briefly those themes that have been regarded by scholars as most prevalent, and those which bear directly on my chosen passages for this project.

¹²Davies, pp. 14-25; 92-93.

A small book by Jeremias alluded to earlier has set forth the main interpretations of the SM very concisely and succinctly. It would be well to examine his findings.

The first answer he found when asking the question of the meaning of the SM was what he calls "...the perfectionist conception...[which says]...in the SM Jesus tells his disciples what he requires of them. He unfolds for them the will of God as this should determine their way of life."¹³ Jeremias points to the criticisms of Hans Windisch which rightly asserts that such a view would make Jesus a legalist and, although Jesus was a Jew and did not intend to supercede the Law, he also went beyond legalism. Jeremias writes that "...Jesus was not a teacher of the law, or a preacher of wisdom, such as could be found among his contemporaries; his message burst the bounds of late Judaism."¹⁴

A second answer Jeremias found was what is called the theory of the impossible ideal which asserts that Jesus did not intend fulfillment of his stringent commands. What he did intend was for people to become aware of their own sins and utter helplessness and thus their need for salvation which can come only through God. According to this the SM 'prepares' us for the saving Grace of

¹³Jeremias, p. 1.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 6.

God.¹⁵ As with the first answer, Jeremias finds a certain validity to this theory. The SM surely has--and continues today--to function this way for many people. But this theory has some major drawbacks: first, nowhere in the SM do we read that this is the intention; secondly, this theory depends on an interpretation of Jesus via the thought of Paul which is a grave distortion of the message of Jesus.¹⁶

The third answer Jeremias has mentioned is the answer of the 'school of thorough-going eschatology' and all its proponents since Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. This idea is known as the 'interim ethic' interpretation and it believes, essentially, that since Jesus fully expected the Kingdom of God to come soon he was interested in propounding laws which were to apply only during this time of crisis--until the Kingdom comes. "The words of the SM are...a last call to repentance before the End."¹⁷

This view has gained much support and is responsible for a radical shift in understanding New Testament times; Bultmann, among others, has emphasized the apocalyptic outlook of many New Testament contemporaries and shown how much of modern criticism failed to understand properly

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

the mind-set of the average first-century Jew. There is much truth to this interpretation and its importance cannot be underestimated.

Yet, this view when applied exclusively gives rise to many errors. For one, it is nearly impossible to find this 'crisis' nature anywhere discussed in the SM. There is more of an emphasis on 'present salvation' rather than a future act.¹⁸ The entire eschatological tendency has recently come to a halt. There were those ready to discount the entire New Testament because of the apocalyptical nature of all the early Christians. This overemphasis is not true to the texts nor does it really substantiate the conclusion to dismiss Jesus' teachings as not important.

Jeremias' study has proved helpful in illuminating much of the past and current thought concerning the SM but the question still remains, what is its meaning? There have been numerous other theories and it seems appropriate at this point to include a brief survey of them.

Harvey K. McArthur discusses twelve various interpretations, some of which overlap with those Jeremias highlights. McArthur divides those interpretations into two categories, those of secondary value and those of primary value. It is the latter category with which I am concerned.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 10-12; see, also, Archibald M. Hunter, A Pattern for Life (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 107-108, on 'realized eschatology.'

The first theory McArthur considers of primary value is what he calls "absolutist view,"¹⁹ which has a definite semblance to Jeremias' perfectionist theory. McArthur derives the value of this theory from what he thinks was originally meant in the SM. After criticizing the impracticality of Leo Tolstoy's attempt to live the SM from an absolutist's view and the modern Anabaptists', he writes that "...such individuals stand as vivid witnesses to the truth that the Sermon was proclaimed in order to be obeyed."²⁰

On this particular point I would like to mention the opinion of Hans Windisch who tries to differentiate between theological exegesis and historical exegesis. He is prepared to do battle with all the major exegeses; his criticisms on many issues are well-founded. He warns against qualifying the extreme demands by sophisticated theological systems which may really only reflect our own philosophical and cultural biases. Windisch contends that when we regard Jesus' imperatives as not to be taken literally "...we will not say that in so doing we are fulfilling the command as Jesus intended it to be fulfilled, for what Jesus intended was literal fulfillment..."²¹

¹⁹Harvey K. McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 139.

²⁰Ibid., p. 140.

²¹Hans Windisch, The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 189-190.

Windisch is not properly an advocate of this absolutist theory but he underscores the point made by McArthur above.

McArthur also delineates the view that the SM must be understood as intentional hyperbole. Giving this theory due consideration he mentions a few passages which seem intelligible only when understood as hyperbole: Mt. 6:24 and Mt. 6:6. But he makes the poignant observation: "unfortunately there is no objective standard by which hyperbolic and non-hyperbolic statements may be discussed."²² In this vein he lists Mt. 5:22c and 5:39 as only two which may be disputed. The impression I get from McArthur (and Windisch²³) is that this theory is one method of reaching a decision on particularly difficult passages but that in terms of an overall theory it is woefully inadequate. I would concur with this.

Another theory McArthur credits with at least partial insight into a proper meaning of the SM is the "general principles" theory, which tries to decipher the underlying principles behind the specific illustrations of the SM. When applied to the six antitheses (Mt. 5:17-48) this theory is especially useful; however, the obvious question, what are the general principles?, is sufficiently

²²McArthur, p. 141.

²³Windisch, p. 188.

difficult to dismiss this theory as widely applicable.

The fourth view is what McArthur calls "attitudes-not-acts."²⁴ This theory deserves to be examined more closely as various scholars have propounded this theory for years--and it remains today a powerful influence in much interpretation of the SM.

W. B. Selbie has written what is characteristic of much scholarship regarding this theory of interpretation:

The prevailing error of the Scribes and Pharisees was, that they judged of conduct by results. Jesus insists that you must go a step further back and judge by motives. Action proceeds from the heart, disposition, spiritual will, and the quality of the action is, and only can be, determined by the quality of the heart out of which it proceeds.²⁵

Archibald M. Hunter is less critical of the Jewish understanding of the Law and, while he does not advocate any one theory of interpretation of the SM, he, nonetheless, emphasizes the distinctiveness of the "inwardness" of Jesus' teaching.²⁶ Writing eighteen years later Jeremias has much the same opinion: "What is really new in the SM is not the unsurpassable height and strictness of Jesus' demands, but something quite different: the motive."²⁷

²⁴McArthur, p. 142.

²⁵W. B. Selbie, "Sin and Its Judgement," The Sermon on the Mount (Cincinnati: Jennings & Graham, n.d.), pp.257-258.

²⁶Hunter, p. 25.

²⁷Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 215.

(It is worthy of note that Jeremias, in the pages following, offers a fresh and insightful discussion into the difference between the Jewish concept of 'reward' and Jesus' idea.)

On the other side, this theory has its opponents--not the least of whom is Windisch:

Obviously it need not be denied that Jesus demands a new attitude...however ...Jesus was not conscious of any tension between principle and precept. He never thought of attitude as something superior to commandment, or of the latter as but a limited and isolated application of the former.²⁸

Two other important scholars concur with Windisch: Conzelmann writes that "offering the cheek is not an attitude; it can be meaningful only in the act;"²⁹ and G. Bornkamm, in directly attacking this theory maintains that "...this antithesis between frame of mind and deed is unquestionably a wrong way out of the difficulties into which the SM leads us. For if one thing becomes clear it is this, that Jesus takes the intention for the deed and consistently demands obedience in actual deed."³⁰

It is obvious that this theory has both hearty support and weighty opposition. It will, again, figure

²⁸Windisch, pp. 85-86.

²⁹Hans Conzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 121.

³⁰Gunther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), appendix 2, p. 224.

prominently into my later exegesis, but I would say now that application has to be tempered with grave concern for the maintaining of the original intent. It is questionable whether Jesus ever meant to adopt this theory. It may work for us but we need to exercise caution in it's use.³¹

Before I return to McArthur's work I want to cite an article by Amos Wilder which contributes yet more views as to the proper understanding of the meaning of the SM. First, Wilder believes that Jesus' teaching needs to be regarded as "prophetic injunction...the prophets always went deeper and asked for more than the letter of the statutes...like Jesus they demanded complete obedience and an entire devotion."³² Secondly, Wilder points out that the SM resembles the Old Testament Wisdom tradition.³³ These viewpoints are important in that they help to move us closer to a proper understanding of the SM but they actually cast little light on the subject of meaning.

McArthur presents the repentance theory which was discussed earlier. The last theory he then calls the "unconditioned divine will...[which]...is a way of saying that the ethic of the Sermon is indeed a statement of

³¹See, Amos N. Wilder, "The Sermon on the Mount," in The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), VII, 163-164.

³²Ibid., VII, 163.

³³Ibid., VII, 163; also, see, Windisch, pp. 41-43.

God's unconditioned will for human life. Our response to it validates its ultimate authority. But within the complexities of our concrete existence we fulfill it indirectly, and perhaps deviously."³⁴ Recognizing fully the dangers of this interpretation he, nevertheless, presents an attractive case for this view.

Martin Dibelius has shared a similar view when he wrote that the SM can be seen as "signs of the Heavenly Kingdom"³⁵ and although we realize they are to be taken seriously we also have to admit they can never be completely fulfilled. Their power consists exactly in this tension.³⁶

In the final analysis McArthur urges the application of all the principles he examined in a particular order.³⁷ I would like to enlarge his list to include the others I have mentioned which, I think, would bring us to the heart of the SM.

I want to turn my attention now to the structure of the SM.

The SM is to be found in Mt. 5-7 and Lk. 6 and other scattered verses (especially in chapters 11-12).³⁸

³⁴McArthur, pp. 145-46.

³⁵Dibelius, pp. 101-102.

³⁶Ibid., p. 102.

³⁷McArthur, p. 148.

³⁸See, Table of Comparisons, Bacon, pp. 172-173.

I have mentioned the impact source-criticism has made on an understanding of the various strata which lie behind the SM; here I want to draw some conclusions as to the composition of the SM.

Much has been written about the Q source which goes beyond the scope of this project but it is crucial to recognize the importance of Q for a proper understanding of the SM. Dibelius has a fascinating discussion on the origin of the name Q; he has finally decided that it does not come from the German word for source--'Quelle'--nor does it reflect any other particular etymology. It was chosen precisely because it carried no presuppositions.³⁹ Dibelius goes on to comment on the nature of Q:

...we have no right to affirm anything about the literary character of the source called Q. What we may say about Q in the present context is only this, that even the source Q contained a summary of the Lord's teaching. This summary underlies the two different renditions of the SM in Luke and in Matthew.⁴⁰

Marriott essentially agrees with this except that he evidently thinks one can affirm more about Q for he includes a lengthy discussion on Q and concludes with an impressive table on the possible wording and order of Q as it is found in the SM.⁴¹

³⁹Dibelius, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 27-28.

⁴¹Marriott, pp. 13-25; tables: pp. 30-43.

For our purposes, though, it is enough to examine Hunter's findings:⁴²

- the chief portions of the SM derived from Q are:
- (1) Four Beatitudes--Mt. 5:3 (Lk. 6:20); 5:4 (Lk. 6:21b); 5:6 (Lk. 6:21a); 5:11-12 (Lk. 6:22-3).
 - (2) The parable of the Defendant--Mt. 5:25-6 (Lk. 12:58-9).
 - (3) The trust and tranquility passage--Mt. 6:22-3 (Lk. 11:34-6).
 - (4) 'Judge not'--Mt. 7:1-5 (Lk. 6:37, 38b, 41-2).
 - (5) 'Ask, and it shall be given you'--Mt. 7:7-12 (Lk. 11:9-13).
 - (6) The parable of the two houses--Mt. 7:24-7 (Lk. 6:47-9).
- To these must be added a few odd verses. If we total them all up, Q verses amount to about forty...⁴³

This must be regarded as one theory; indeed, there is considerable dispute over the extent to which Q is reflected in the SM.

Hunter,⁴⁴ Davies,⁴⁵ and others have postulated another source, M, which the author of Matthew drew upon when forming his longer version of the SM.

At any rate, Wilder has summarized the prevalent understanding as to the probable composition of the SM. He believes that Matthew took the source found in Lk. 6 (Q) and worked it into his own framework adding other sayings, and no doubt, making his own additions and

⁴²Included are the Lucan parallels as found in Bacon, pp. 172-173.

⁴³Hunter, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁵Davies, pp. 387ff.

transitions.⁴⁶ Therefore, it is agreed that, on the whole, Luke's account is truer to the earlier sources and, because we know the SM was not given at one certain time but is rather a collection of teachings, it is closer to the original order of the sayings.⁴⁷

An excellent outline of the SM, as it is in Matthew, can be found in Wilder's article⁴⁸ which allows us to label Mt. 5:17-48 as the 'six antitheses.' As to those antitheses there is considerable agreement that Matthew has added to his Q source. Conzelmann summarizes the research findings up to now:

...three of the six antitheses are 'genuine.' Genuine does not mean that they are authentic words of Jesus, but that the antithesis is strictly related to the thesis...the genuine antitheses are the first (5:21-4), second (5:27-30), and fourth (5:33-7). They have no parallel in Luke, and therefore did not stand in Q. The three other antitheses (5:31-2; 38-42; 43-48) are formed from sayings which were also transmitted by Q, but not in an antithetical version. This form was only given to them by Matthew. Their characteristic mark is that the antitheses can be understood by themselves...⁴⁹

One critical question regarding these antitheses can be answered. It has often been assumed that this section is proof that Jesus meant to assert a 'New Law',

⁴⁶Wilder, VII, 159.

⁴⁷Marriott, pp. 42ff; Dibelius, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁸Wilder, VII, 157.

⁴⁹Conzelmann, pp. 120-121.

that he intended to annul the Torah; this has to be denied. It is true that Jesus brought a new interpretation but in no way did he mean to annul the old law. Davies has written that in "...none of the antitheses is there an intention to annul the provisions of the Law but only carry them to their ultimate meaning...we cannot speak of the Law being annulled in the antitheses, but only of its being intensified in its demand, or reinterpreted in a higher key."⁵⁰ For further support we need only consult Dibelius⁵¹, Conzelmann⁵², Martyn Lloyd-Jones⁵³.

More will be said about the antitheses; however, I want to conclude this section by stating that my intention has been to give an overview of the SM--its meaning and its construction. Now, I want to turn directly to Mt. 5:21-6; 38-42 and their parallels, recognizing that the first is genuine while the latter has been reformulated. But because both contain theological content that is related--and because they are found as part of a unit in Matthew, I will treat them together.

⁵⁰Davies, p. 102.

⁵¹Dibelius, pp. 22-24.

⁵²Conzelmann, pp. 121-122.

⁵³D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 216.

CHAPTER III

EXEGESIS

I. Mt. 5:17-26/Lk. 12:58-9

A. TranslationMt. 5:17-26

- 17 Do not think that I came to annul the law or the
prophets; I came not to annul but to fulfill.
- 18 For truly I say to you, until the heavens and the
earth pass away, one iota or one part of a letter
will by no means pass away from the law, until
all things come to pass.
- 19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of
these commandments and teaches thus to men will
be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but who-
ever does and teaches them will be called great in
the kingdom of heaven.
- 20 For I tell you except that your righteousness
(more than) exceed that of the scribes and
pharisees, by no means will you enter into the
kingdom of heaven.
- 21 "You have heard that it was said to the men of
ancient times: 'you shall not commit murder and
whoever murders will be liable to the local court.

- 22 But I tell you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to the local court; whoever says to his brother, 'Empty Head,' will be liable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'Fool!' will be liable to the Gehenna of fire.
- 23 Therefore, if you are bringing your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there
- 24 before the altar and go, first, become reconciled to your brother and then, coming, offer your gift.
- 25 Make friends quickly with your opponent while you are with him on the way, lest the opponent deliver you to the judge and the judge to the attendant and you be put in prison;
- 26 Truly, I say to you, you will not come out from there until you have paid the last coin.

B. Analysis^{1a}

Mt. 5:17-26

I. Introduction to six illustrations:

A. General purpose of teachings.

1. οὐκ ἤλθον καταλῦσαι (not to annul)

2. ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι (but to fulfill)

v.17

^{1a} I am indebted to Hans Dieter Betz for the structure of this analysis.

B. Talmudic saying: use of Jewish eschatology.

1. reference to the end of time.

2. completion of law:

a. ἰῶτα (not iota)

b. μία κεραία (not part of letter)

c. ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται (till all things come to pass)

v.18

C. Eschatological Law: antithetical parallelismus membrorum.

1. Negative protasis: ὅς ἐάν οὖν λύσῃ
(whoever breaks...)2. apodosis: ἐλάχιστος κληθήσεται
(will be called least)3. Positive protasis: ὅς δ' ἂν ποιήσῃ
(but whoever does...)4. apodosis: μέγας κληθήσεται
(will be called great)

v.19

D. Spelling out conditions of eschatological law:

1. Demand for qualitative difference:

a. ἐὰν μὴ ... περισσεύσῃ ... δικαιοσύνη
(unless...righteousness...exceeds)b. γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων
(scribes and pharisees)

2. Result of not fulfilling demand:

a. οὐ μὴ (by no means)

b. εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν

(enter kingdom of heaven)

v.20

II. First Illustration of Jesus' Antithetical Teaching

A. Reference to tradition.

1. passive voice
2. Torah instruction

B. Law Statement:

1. Negative command
2. protasis: ὃς δ' ἂν φονεύσῃ (whoever murders)
3. apodosis: ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει (will be liable to local court)

v.21

C. First Antithetical Teaching

1. Challenge to authority
2. Three-fold teaching: climax to eschatological judgment:
 - a. protasis: πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος (everyone who is angry)
 - b. apodosis: ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει (liable to local court)
 - c. protasis: ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ ... ῥακά (whoever says...Empty Head)
 - d. apodosis: ἔνοχος ἔσται τῷ συνεδρίῳ (liable to Sanhedrin)
 - e. protasis: ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ...μωρέ (whoever says... Fool)

f. apodosis: ἔνοχος... γέεναν τοῦ πυρός

(liable...Gehenna of fire)

v.22

D. Two illustrative cases:

1. Illustration of ritual and reconciliation.

a. description of action: προσφέρῃς τὸ δῶρόν σου

(bringing your gift)

b. Interruption: μνησθῆς...ἀδελφός

(remember...brother)

v.23

c. Solution:

(1). command to stop ritual

(2). admonition to reconciliation

(3). finish ritual

v.24

2. Illustration of approaching court and reconciliation

a. Admonition to make peace on way

b. Description of consequences:

(1). παραδῶ ὁ ἀντίδικος τῷ κριτῇ

(opponent deliver to judge)

(2). κριτῆς τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ

(judge to attendant)

(3). εἰς φυλακὴν βληθήσῃ

(put in prison)

v.25

c. Conclusion to illustration

(1). reasserting authority

(2). prediction of sentence

(3). payment required

v.26

Lk. 12:58-9

- 58 "For as you go with your opponent to a ruler, on the way take pains to come to a settlement with him, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge delivers you to the bailiff, and the bailiff throws you into prison.
- 59 I tell you, you will not come out from there until you pay the last coin.

Lk. 12:58-9

- I. Illustration of approaching court and reconciliation.
- A. Description of setting
1. persons present
 2. destination: ἐπ' ἄρχοντα (to a ruler)
- B. Command to make peace.
1. description of place: ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ (on the way)
 2. effort demanded
- C. Description of consequences: threefold action leading to prison.
1. κατασύρη σε πρὸς τὸν κριτὴν
(drag you to judge)
 2. κριτῆς . . . πράκτορι
(judge...bailiff)
 3. πράκτωρ . . . φυλακὴν
(bailiff...into prison)

v.58

D. Conclusion:

1. assertion of authority
2. prediction of sentence
3. payment required

v.59

C. Exegesis

Concerning Mt. 5:17-20, it is necessary to note that vv. 21-48 are illustrations of the command in v. 20. We read in vv. 17-19 that Jesus is, indeed, in tune with the Jewish tradition. One has to reckon with the extremeness of vv. 18-19--perhaps this is hyperbolic, perhaps it reflects the Jewish influence on the author(s) of Matthew--but it is important to bear in mind that Jesus has just asked for more from his followers than is expected of the Scribes and Pharisees. In the following six antitheses he is going to elaborate on this demand. Therefore, it is more correct to understand Jesus as being in tension with the interpretation the Scribes and Pharisees gave to the Torah than to think of Jesus as annulling the Torah itself. Before I examine vv. 21-26, 38-42, and parallels in Luke, I want to list the six antitheses that Jesus expounds in this section. We need to remember that only in Matthew is this arrangement found and that what we have is a compilation with, no doubt, some editing and adding which is an elaboration of the Lucan version of the Sermon on the Plain, plus other sayings by Jesus. This realization makes

a detailed study of the following all the more important:

Mt. 5:21-6	<u>Anger.</u>
:27-30	Adultery.
:31-32	Divorce.
:33-37	Oaths/Swearing.
<u>:38-42</u>	<u>Retaliation.</u>
:43-48	Love.

Discussion of Research. The first problem one encounters when approaching this particular text is the construction of Mt. 5:21-26. Lk. 12:58 roughly parallels Mt. 5:25, while Lk. 12:59 roughly parallels Mt. 5:26. In the case of the former, Lk. 12:58 leads with a clause that Mt. does not include; also, the choice of words differs: Mt. uses εὐνοῶν ('be well disposed'), Lk uses ἀπηλλάχθαι ('come to settlement'); Mt. uses ὑπηρέτη (attendant), Lk., πρακτόρι (bailiff). Regarding the latter, Mt. chooses κοδράντην (farthing), while Lk uses λεπτόν (lepton). Because of the nature of Mt. we need to stay closer to the Lucan passages--and their order.^{1b} The first question we have to answer is, where did Mt. get vv. 21-24?² The answer to this is not easily obtained but its importance cannot be minimized for we are also asking

^{1b} See, especially, Horace Marriott, The Sermon on the Mount (Macmillan, 1925), p. 65.

² Benjamin W. Bacon, Studies in Matthew (New York: Holt, 1930), Table, pp. 172-3.

about the authenticity of a saying ascribed to Jesus.

Bultmann is not clear on how he regards vv. 21-22. The insertion of $\epsilon\lambda\kappa\eta$ (without a cause) in v. 22a is no doubt a later gloss; Bultmann surmises that it was an attempt to "depress enthusiastic demands to the level of a bourgeois morality."³ But the real issue is the presence of v. 22. Bultmann suggests, at one point, that 22b is a secondary addition. He gives, essentially, three reasons, : first, the phrase has no parallel, secondly, "it diminishes the hitting power of the antithesis,"⁴ and, thirdly, $\kappa\rho\iota\varsigma$ (judgment) would have to be understood differently in 22a from 21. He states that in v. 21 it means judgment but in 22a it has to take on the meaning of the local court.⁵

The first two reasons are weak; they will be discussed more shortly. The third reason is interesting because Bultmann is one of the few who notes this possible distinction. However, as far as I have been able to determine there is no reason to assume $\kappa\rho\iota\varsigma$ in v. 21 has to take on the meaning of divine or general judgment. Filson indicates that the reference to murder and punishment in v. 21 is recalling Old Testament teaching (Ex.21:12;

³Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 134.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

Num. 35:16-33) which implies legal proceedings.⁶ James Morison, in exegeting v. 21, writes: "By 'the judgement' we are apparently to understand not God's final judgment, but...a certain subordinate Jewish court or tribunal."⁷ Finally, A. H. McNeile also thinks the reference is to legal proceedings.⁸

Bultmann also questions the appropriateness of v. 22b on the basis that it appears unusual that the expressions of anger are punished more severely than the anger itself--especially in light of the desire to minimize external actions.⁹ But, at this point, Bultmann does not attempt to understand the passage as a totality; it seems to me he has jumped to a conclusion before really explaining his understanding of it. From what he has said I am not convinced that the apparent development of vv. 21-22 was not originally intended.

In another context Bultmann comments on the possibility of Mt. 5:21-4 being an early church construction.

In my opinion the words 'I say unto you' can here be historical; but this naturally does not take us beyond a possibility, and we must be content to affirm a 'genuineness' only in the sense that the Church's new

⁶Floyd V. Filson, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 84-5.

⁷James Morison, A Practical Commentary on Gospel According to S. Matthew (Boston: Bartlett, 1934), p. 71.

⁸A.H. McNeile, The Gospel According to Matthew (New York: Macmillan, 1915), p. 61.

⁹Bultmann, p. 134.

possession, from which these sayings derive, goes back to the preaching of Jesus.¹⁰

It seems that Bultmann is skeptical because we cannot know for sure.

Others have commented on the nature of vv. 21-4 and, more specifically, the extent to which vv. 21-2 are authentic sayings of Jesus. Marriott thinks that both v. 21 and 22 originally stood in Q's SM. There seems little doubt concerning v. 21 but 22 is a different matter. The fact that Jesus appears to delineate degrees of anger and its expression coupled with increasing degrees of punishment-- ὀργιζόμενος (anger)... κρίσει (local court); ρακά (empty head)... συνεδρίω (Sanhedrin); and μωρέ (Fool).... χέενναν τοῦ πυρός (Gehenna of fire)-- has led many to postulate that Jesus would never have established such a legalistic and rigid commandment. However, Marriott thinks otherwise:

It is true that there is difficulty in the three specified degrees of offense and of penalty. But all this matter seems too closely connected for it to be reasonable to suppose that Q ended with the words, ἔσται τῇ κρίσει (shall be to the judgment); or at any other point before the close of v. 22.¹¹

Davies does not think the problem is that easily solved; in fact, he believes that "there is some reason for thinking that the original unit here was formed by

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 147.

¹¹ Marriott, p. 86.

vv. 21, 22a. The change from $\pi\alpha\varsigma \delta$ (everyone) in v. 22 to $\delta\varsigma \delta' \alpha\upsilon$ (whoever) in the middle of the verse suggests a change of material..."¹² Moreover, Davies points out that if Jesus hoped to "remove the nice calculation of less and more in the matter of anger and hatred in human relationships ...by placing murder and anger on the same level of significance, then the reintroduction of degrees of anger and retribution in v. 22b, c is a contradiction of his intention."¹³

Davies' solution to this quandry is questionable--but certainly not impossible. He regards v. 22b, c as a gemaric addition (a rabbinic commentary on the Talmud) inserted by a person influenced by or directly involved with the Dead Sea Sect. He bases this conclusion on a similar passage from a Dead Sea Scroll (DSD vi 24ff) which does not parallel v. 22b, c but does have certain affinities.¹⁴

The validity of this proposal is hard to uphold or completely refute. Davies himself states that it is not foolproof and that Jesus, himself, may have had the Dead Sea Sect in mind.¹⁵ But, one C.F.D. Moule, whose expertise

¹²W.D. Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 235.

¹³Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 237-8.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 238.

far surpasses mine, has other hesitations with Davies' solution. In an excellent article dealing with this exact problem--the nature of v. 22--he criticizes Davies' 'gemario insertion' as leaving us with the task of trying to make sense of Jesus' teaching (v. 22a) without any indication how to interpret *κρίσει*. He argues that the difficulty of understanding *κρίσει* as either 'human court' or 'divine judgment' leads us "to accept either bathos or the necessity to interpret arbitrarily..."¹⁶

Moule mentions other attempts to make sense of this troubling passage; he cites a suggestion by S.C. Neill to add v. 22b, c to v. 21 which would have Jesus shorten and simplify the teaching rather than complicate. Neill evidently thought v. 21 would then reflect Pharisaic thought more correctly.¹⁷ Moule doubts that it would accurately reflect Pharisaic thinking; more importantly he notes that this construction would join a teaching on murder with two teachings on verbal offenses which does not seem logical--or likely. Further, he finds Neill's interpretation of *κρίσει* as 'God's judgment' totally unacceptable.¹⁸

¹⁶C.F.D. Moule, "Uncomfortable Words: I. The Angry Word: Mt. 5:21f.," Expository Times, LXXXI (October, 1969), 11.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 10, and footnote 1, on p. 10.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 11; See, also, Archibald M. Hunter, A Pattern for Life (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), p. 46, for another alternative.

Moule's own suggestion may seem nearly as unplausible but he takes pain to explain it fully; I will only summarize here. Essentially, he believes v. 22b, c were originally only one phrase but through a confusion the *μωρέ* clause and the *ῥακά* clause separated. This theory is not an idle conjecture; he has evidence and support to rightly postulate that *μωρέ* and *ῥακά* were originally the same; he quotes patristic writings in support of an original single clause, and convincingly accounts for the insertion of *συνεδρίω* (Sanhedrin).¹⁹ According to Moule, then, v. 22 read as follows:

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to [the court] and whoever says 'Raca!' to his brother shall be liable to the hell of fire.²⁰

Moule finds this reconstruction more acceptable because it interprets *κρίσει* more favorably and still delivers a powerful message (to which I will turn shortly).²¹

The foregoing discussion brings to light the difficulty of a proper understanding of vv. 21-22. At this point it is important to be aware of the nuances operating. It is also crucial to note that all the scholars thus consulted assume, directly or indirectly, that vv. 21-22 reflect an

¹⁹Ibid., p. 12.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 13.

authentic kernel of Jesus' teaching. To what extent the alternatives proposed would drastically alter Jesus' meaning has yet to be determined. But before I turn to a discussion of the meaning of the phrases and words, attention needs to be focused on the rest of this passage, vv. 23-26, and the Lucan parallel.

Regarding vv. 23-4, Marriott admits the possibility of its fitting into Q's SM but he finally decides that they really do not belong to the present context: "Retaining them, the section ends abruptly whilst, omitting them, there is an impressive climax."²² However, the big catch in these verses lies in the implied reference to Jerusalem. McNeile realizes this and writes that "since...the scenery is placed in Jerusalem, and Galileans would seldom be able to bring a gift to the Temple in person...it is possible that vv. 23f. originally stood in another context, and were spoken in Judea."²³ Marriott concurs with this reasoning, saying it is "more likely that the verses have been imported from outside the Sermon."²⁴

When I began studying Mt. 5:25-6 and Lk. 12:58-9 I assumed that I would be on steadier ground for here we have a unit that is found in two Gospels. But, in terms of this study, I have discovered that what we have in Mt. is not at

²²Marriott, p. 87.

²³McNeile, p. 63.

²⁴Marriott, p. 87.

all what Luke had in mind--and not what Jesus had in mind.
 T.W. Manson sums up the essence of the discrepancy between
 Mt. and Lk.:

We have a good deal of evidence outside the SM that parables and sayings, which originally were warnings to the man [woman] in the street to flee from the wrath to come, have been adapted by the early Church and have become pieces of good advice for those within the Christian community. One of the simplest and most striking is the piece of advice (Mt. 5:25-6) about coming to an agreement with your adversary in a law-suit while still on the way to court, in case he takes you and hands you over to the judge, and judge to the jailor, and you find yourself in prison until the last penny is paid!...It is probable that the original moral of that story (Lk. 12:58-9) was that men[and women]are living on the edge of judgment, that any moment now they may be called upon to render an account, that it is God with whom they will have to reckon...²⁵

This theory is confirmed and strengthened in a penetrating article by George B. Caird in which he analyzes both the Matthean and Lucan accounts of this 'parable of the defendant.'²⁶ The latter account, which is closer to Jesus' intent, has it placed among a series of "warnings about an imminent crisis (Lk. 12:35-12:9)...It is likely that this is where it already stood in the document Q..."²⁷ This parable was directed primarily to the nation of Israel:

Luke recognized that the parables of warning were concerned in the first instance with the historical crisis which the ministry of Jesus provoked in the

²⁵T.W. Manson, Ethics and the Gospel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), p. 47.

²⁶George B. Caird, "Expounding the Parables: I.The Defendant (Mt. 5:25f; Lk. 12:58f)," Expository Times, LXXVII (November 1965), 36-9.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 37-8.

national life of Israel...When Jesus warned his disciples about the approaching crisis, he warned them not to be caught napping by it, because it was liable to take them by surprise.²⁸

Evidence supporting Caird is not difficult to discover. Manson remarks that "Jesus urges his generation to make its peace with God."²⁹ He also notes the distinction between Mt. and Lk. and agrees that Luke is the more trustworthy.³⁰ Arndt makes much the same comment,³¹ as does Wilder.³²

How then does Mt. use this parable? Caird has given us the two most likely options: either Mt. meant it as an allegory or as an example. If it is intended to be an allegory "then the way to court is the duration of a man's [woman's] life, the settling of the account is repentance, the court is the last judgment...and the story is introduced at this point to illustrate the saying that even the man [woman] who sneers at his [her] fellow is liable to the flames of hell."³³ If it is meant to be an

²⁸Ibid., pp. 38-9.

²⁹William Manson, The Gospel of Luke (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930), p. 161.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹William F. Arndt, Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to St. Luke (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), p. 325.

³²Amos N. Wilder, "The Sermon on the Mount," in The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), VII, 159.

³³Caird, p. 37.

example then it elaborates vv. 21-4 in showing the need for reconciliation between people. Caird helps us make the proper decision between these two possibilities when he rightly points out that Mt. begins his section with the words ἵσθι, εὐνοῶν τῷ ἀντιδίκῳ (Make friends quickly with your opponent) which is senseless if we assume the allegorical meaning. Caird, therefore, thinks Mt. intended to use this unit, not as Lk. found it in Q, but as a further extension of Mt. 5:21-4.³⁴

Plummer summarizes the meaning as follows:

The previous case (vv. 23-24) teaches a man [woman] to be reconciled to his [her] fellow-man [woman] because God forbids enmity. This case teaches a man [woman] to be reconciled to his [her] adversary because the adversary may put him [her] in prison. But, taking the verses as they are placed here, we may say that they contain a parable to enforce one of the lessons of the previous illustration, viz. that no time must be lost...possibly the parable means no more than this: one cannot be too speedy in putting an end to bad feeling.³⁵

Other scholars are, generally, in agreement with this interpretation. Wilder stresses it;³⁶ Morison assumes the example interpretation;³⁷ T.H. Robinson notes its

³⁴Ibid., p. 37.

³⁵Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Stock, 1909), p. 80.

³⁶Wilder, p. 159.

³⁷Morison, pp. 74-5.

improper setting and agrees with Caird.³⁸ Manson³⁹ and Arndt⁴⁰ have already been mentioned in this context.

Thus, we have a situation in which Mt. 5:22 is quite subject to question--at least in its present state; vv. 23-4 are out of context; and vv. 25-6 are seemingly misunderstood. It is now my aim to comment briefly on the wording of this text.

v. 21. There has been some debate regarding τοῖς ; the K.J.V. has translated it 'by' but the preferred translation is 'to.' Morison has examined the situation quite adequately and favors 'to.' The apparent minute difference actually could be important: 'it was said by the men of ancient-times' as opposed to 'it was said to the men of ancient times.' Morison explains that the former translation "would have been tantamount to an appeal to men only, men exclusive of God...[whereas the latter translation shows that]...they were wishing to affix to their traditional dogmas the seal and sanction of the highest possible authority."⁴¹

The translation of φονεύσεις (and φονεύσῃ) could be either 'shall not kill' or 'shall not murder' and,

³⁸Theodore H. Robison, The Gospel of Matthew (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1928), pp. 39-40.

³⁹Manson, p. 161.

⁴⁰Arndt, p. 325.

⁴¹Morison, p. 71.

since the meaning is clear, I have chosen murder.⁴²

I have already discussed the meaning of κρίσει and, although many scholars translate it 'judgment' the actual reference is to the local court, so I have chosen this term.

v. 22. I have mentioned that (αὐτοῦ) εἰκῇ (without a cause) is a gloss. I also have discussed some possible alternative constructions; now I want to look again at the words, ῥακά and μωρέ. The translations of these two words are very close--ῥακά meaning 'empty head', and μωρέ meaning 'fool.' Aside from the possibility that they are unintentional reiterations there have been a number of suggestions from various commentators. One of the most ingenious is offered by C.F. Anderson who believes that ῥακά implies contempt, which can be more cruel than mere anger, and that μωρέ implies malice and invokes a curse, which is more deadly yet.⁴³ This little theory is neat and concise but I do not find much agreement with it among scholars. Andrews seems to read more into the text than is actually there. The thought that Jesus was commenting on expressions of anger may be plausible but it is questionable that he intended the exact distinctions Andrew finds.

⁴²William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 872.

⁴³C.F. Andrews, The Sermon on the Mount (New York: Macmillan, 1942), p. 105.

Jeremias has a different view. He admits that it appears to be a climax of sins and climax of punishment but, in the end, thinks it is a rhetorical device.⁴⁴

Plummer speculates that "Christ is ironically imitating the casuistical distinctions drawn by the Rabbis, and at the same time is teaching that all degrees of hatred and contempt, whether expressed or not, are sinful."⁴⁵

Συνεδρίῳ refers to the highest Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. Γέεναν τοῦ πυρός means the 'Gehenna of fire.' There is the possibility that Gehenna and hell were not synonymous for Jesus;⁴⁶ at any rate, the meaning is clear: Jesus has emphasized the wickedness of such expressions.⁴⁷

Looking at this verse as a whole it is clear that here we have the essence of Jesus' thinking--and feeling--on anger. I have examined the references to the different courts as well as the various sins Jesus is condemning. In reference to the former, I think Moule is correct when he writes that "there is no need to press the reference to a particular court too hard; it would be occasioned simply

⁴⁴Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), pp. 148-9.

⁴⁵Plummer, p. 79.

⁴⁶W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, Matthew (Garden City, Doubleday, 1971), p. 61.

⁴⁷Filson, p. 85.

by the rhetorical necessity to express dramatically the comparison(s)."48

If we believe Jeremias (above) then the seemingly difficult invectives lose their importance too. What is Jesus saying, then?

Two answers come from Moule (recall his reconstruction above):

First, it is the springs of crime that need watching. Anger is essentially as grave as murder. Spiritually and psychologically, the desire to do evil is as wicked as the doing of it...And, secondly, contempt for one's 'brother' [neighbor] is wicked in the extreme...What emerges from the Matthean saying is the immense gravity of allowing scorn to enter into our relation with others.49

Regarding the 'Gehenna phrase,' Moule admits to the need for an in-depth study. "But, at least we can say that it matters as much as heaven or hell whether one's attitude to others is one of reverence and patient understanding or of scorn and anger."50

Filson follows a similar line by writing that "hostility and ill-treatment find expression not only in murder but also in anger, outspoken scorn and furious contempt. These too are wrong..That words of scorn and contempt lead to such final punishment clearly indicates their wickedness."51

48Moule, p. 13.

49Ibid.

50Ibid.

51Filson, p. 85.

Still another opinion arises from a discussion of anger as it is found in Old Testament and New Testament times. Stahlin notes the "anti-godly background of human wrath"⁵² and assumes this influenced Jesus. He stresses "the absoluteness of the demand of Jesus. Even anger which does not find expression in a single blow is compared to a fatal blow. Anger is the first step to murder."⁵³

vv. 23-4. The only controversy I uncovered--and it is of no real importance--is the placing of *πρῶτον* (first) in the context of v. 24.⁵⁴

As to the meaning we have to assume that Mt. found them and/or changed them slightly to fit the context. T.H. Robinson has captured the meaning very well:

It would generally be agreed that the performance of some religious act should take precedence of other demands. But even the most holy of all religious acts...must take second place...if a man [woman] suddenly remember[s] that his [her] brother [neighbor] has a grievance against him [her], the completion of the sacrifice must be postponed till the personal claim is satisfied...it would be difficult to find any stronger terms in which to emphasize the paramount claims of the humaner elements in life.⁵⁵

⁵²W. Stahlin, "The Wrath of Man and the Wrath of God in the New Testament," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), V, 42.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴For details, see, Morison, p. 74.

⁵⁵Robinson, p. 39; see also, Filson, p. 85.

vv. 25-6. ἴσθι εὐνοῶν τῷ ἀντιδίκῳ σου , I

have translated 'make friends quickly with your opponent' although other alternatives are possible. This should be compared with the Lucan parallel, v. 58, which reads

δός ἐργασίαν ἀπηλλάχθαι 'take pains to come to

a settlement.' Other discrepancies are of minor significance. I have already discussed various interpretations of these verses.

Personal Comments and Conclusions. My concern in this project is to examine Jesus' teaching on anger then to search for supporting insights or evidence from the field of psychology. I have tried to seek scholarly opinion as to the various facets of this antithesis. In the next section I am going to examine another antithesis which is related to the problem. Now, I want to make some personal observations on Mt. 5:21-6//Lk. 12:58-9.

I have found the research to extremely fascinating. To discover the problems with v. 22 and the following illustrations has been a tremendous learning experience for me.

In my analysis I have described v. 22 as a three-fold teaching on anger. Moule's article would take exception to this understanding. Perhaps, most importantly, he does not allow for the eschatological element. It seems to me that Jesus has here constructed a climax--maybe for

rhetorical purposes--but also to illustrate the eschatological importance of this teaching.

When we ask the question, what is Jesus saying about anger?, I can accept Moule's position more easily. I believe Jesus, among other things, is intending to go behind the act of murder. This would comply with what in chapter II I referred to as the 'inward' interpretation. That certainly is operating. But, rather than assert that Jesus' 'New Way' is to recognize the motive behind the act is to oversimplify his message and distort the intent of the Torah.

Jesus is recognizing the importance of the psychological condition of anger. Now, this is not to say Jesus was a precursor to modern psychology. I am not trying to make Jesus 'a friend of psychology.' The authority and value of Jesus' teaching do not need any support from any modern science. But this investigation has shown that Jesus did have a real sense of the 'spiritual', of the psychological aspects of life. He knew human nature and he could sense roots of sin many times.

Whether one condenses v. 22b, c or combines part into v. 21 and declares v. 22c a repetition, the essential point is obvious. Jesus is heightening the awareness of the condition that so often leads to murder.

The attempts to delineate a separate meaning for each of the expressions of anger in v. 22b, c (ῥακά, μωρέ)

and the increasing punishments as a consequence thereof have led some to believe that Jesus declared scorn worse than contempt or the utterance of 'empty head' less offensive than the derogatory term 'fool!' I do not want to push this verse that far; I would like to allow for the possibility that there has been some editing and rearranging. This realization may not permit a concise demarcation of v. 22b, c in terms of each parallel expression; yet, if we agree that Jesus is giving an intentional climax to the teaching, and if we agree that the importance lies not in the possible nuances of a chosen expression but, rather, in the overall thrust of the verse, I think this verse can be understood as a whole--a whole which, in a ruthless and calculating manner, stresses the need to become aware of one's feelings, motives as well as actions.

The two illustrative examples offer further evidence of the importance of this teaching. The various alternatives have been discussed above; but as one looks at the setting it is clear that Jesus is stressing the priority human relationships--right human relationships--should take in one's life. Human relationships are holy and are to be treated as such. This follows directly from the penetrating analysis Jesus just gave (v. 22) into one common--and destructive--barrier to human relationships.

This raises an interesting question concerning Jesus' teaching on anger--one that is important for this study. Is

Jesus teaching that one should never be angry, that the very presence of anger is a sin? Commentators wrestle with this; many psychologists dismiss Christianity on the grounds that Christians live in a world contrary to human nature. Again, I am not troubled by statements from psychology: I am concerned with the words and thoughts of Jesus.

I think we have to recognize that Jesus does bring us into tension with our natural instincts. I think the kingdom of heaven concept was based on the belief that we are called to go beyond ourselves. I find this crucial to my own life. I know fully that I am human and that I am subject to human emotions and instincts. I also know that the Power and Grace of God call me beyond my self. Jesus demanded the most, the best. His standard of measurement was the pure will of God--not the average mean for a sample group of people.

Further, I believe it is important to recognize that Jesus also was a human. We can easily detect his anger--as well as fear, loneliness and discouragement. As I have studied vv. 21-6, I have seen that Jesus not only deals with our emotions but he also advises us on the use of the emotion. Thus, he urges us to act on a bad relationship; he tells us to settle quickly. The setting and the construction of these verses may be problematic, but they, nevertheless, reflect the importance of dealing fairly, quickly, and honestly with one's anger. The Gospels are

filled with examples of Jesus living his life in exactly this manner.

The crucial aspect of Jesus' own anger has been observed by scholars. Jesus' anger was not a self-centered anger. I think it is appropriate to note that, here, not only did Jesus call people beyond their own limitations, he called them beyond their own selves. There seems to me a distinction between a selfish anger and an anger over injustice or cruelty. I shall return to this idea later; for now we need to be aware of this possibility.

Based on these observations and the nature of the text I do not think it is fair to say that Jesus' point is that one should hide--even to oneself--the emotion of anger. He recognizes the disastrous effects of anger but the fact that he also heightens our awareness of its presence makes me think that he has gone beyond simple chastisement for a natural emotion.

Jesus did not simply teach or instruct; he exhorted. His exhortations were remembered for they took on a note of urgency. Jesus raised the problem of anger--and its accompanying expressions to a critical level. He demands his followers 'search their souls'; to be aware of what it is that drives them to violence; to act on that, and, finally, to go beyond themselves and look to God and the kingdom of heaven as their guide and judge.

II. Mt. 5:38-42/Lk. 6:29-30

A. TranslationMt. 5:28-42

- 38 You have heard that it was said: 'An eye in place
of an eye and a tooth in place of a tooth;
- 39 But I tell you not to oppose the evildoer; but who-
ever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him,
also, the other;
- 40 and to the one wishing to take you to court and take
your tunic, permit him, also, the cloak;
- 41 and whoever forces you one mile, go with him two.
- 42 To the one demanding of you, give, and the one who
wishes to borrow from you, do not reject.

Lk. 6:29-30

- 29 To the one striking you on the cheek turn, also, the
other, and from the one taking your cloak do not
prevent your tunic.
- 30 To everyone that asks of you, give, and from the
one taking your things do not demand back.

B. Analysis^{55a}

^{55a} I am indebted to Hans Dieter Betz for the struc-
ture of this analysis.

I. Fifth illustration of Jesus' Antithetical Teaching

A. Reference to traditional: lex talionis v.38

B. Fifth antithesis: contradiction of contemporary understanding

C. Five illustrative cases:

1. protasis: ἀλλ' ὅστις σε ραπίζει εἰς τὴν δεξιὰν σιαχὺν

(whoever slaps you on right cheek)

2. apodosis: στρέψον...τὴν ἄλλην (turn the other) v.39

3. protasis: κριθῆναι καὶ τὸν χιτῶνά σου λαβεῖν

(to court and take your tunic)

4. apodosis: καὶ τὸ ἱμάτιον (also, the cloak) v.40

5. protasis: ὅστις σε ἀχχαρεύσει μίλιον ἓν

(whoever forces you one mile)

6. apodosis: ὕπαγε μετ' αὐτοῦ δύο

(go with him two)

v.41

7. protasis: τῷ αἰτοῦντι (to the one demanding)

8. apodosis: δός (give)

9. protasis: τὸν θέλοντα ἀπὸ σοῦ δανίσασθαι

(the one who wishes to borrow)

10. apodosis: ἀποστραφῆς (do not reject) v.42

Lk. 6:29-30

I. Four illustrations of exhortation:

A. protasis: τῷ τύπτοντι (to the one striking)

B. apodosis: πάρεχε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην (turn the other)

C. protasis: αἴροντός σου τὸ ἱμάτιον (taking your cloak)

D. apodosis: χιτῶνα μὴ κωλύσης (do not prevent your tunic)

v.29

- E. protasis: αἰτοῦντί σε (asks of you)
 F. apodosis: δίδου (give)
 G. protasis: αἶροντος τὰ σὰ (taking your things)
 H. apodosis: μὴ ἀπαίτει (do not demand back) v-30

C. Exegesis

Discussion of Research. The first task here is to determine the parallels and, after a comparison, establish if one Gospel appears more original than the other. The following verses in Mt. are peculiar to his records: vv. 38, 39a, & 41.⁵⁶ Verse 39b, c parallels with v. 29a in Luke, v. 40 and 29b are parallels as are v. 42 and v. 30.

While in the preceding study it was generally agreed that Luke was more true to the sources--and therefore to Jesus--the case in this section may very well be reversed. This is verified by examining the detailed word-study of Marriott. ὅστις σε ῥαπίζει (who slaps you), Mt. 5:39b, is preferred to τῷ τυπτόντι (to the one striking), Lk. 6:29a, on the basis that the Lucan phrase is quite common, not only to Lk. but also to Mt., and is more likely to be an addition.⁵⁷

He does think Mt. added δεξιάν (right), for he writes that a blow would usually strike a person's left

⁵⁶Marriott, p. 87; also thinks they come directly from Q, which seems to be a safe assumption.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 109.

cheek anyway.⁵⁸ However, this seemingly minor discrepancy between Mt. and Lk. could be more serious. Jeremias believes the Matthean addition to be more original. He finds this passage to be an example of an Eastern custom to strike someone with the back of one's hand (most likely it would land on the person's right cheek) as an expression of contempt and hostility.⁵⁹ The implications of this will be discussed shortly; here, I want to point out that the presence of δεξιάν (right) may be the key to the interpretation of the passage and cannot be taken as a mere insertion.

Marriott also prefers Mt. 5:40 to Lk. 6:29b for, as he says, "the reference to a process of law seems to bear the mark of originality. It is easier to understand the change of the saying from the Matthean form into a general maxim as in Lk. than the reverse process."⁶⁰ Note here the positioning of ἱμάτιον (cloak, or outer garment) before χιτῶνα (tunic, or inner garment) in Lk. but not in Mt. This appears to change the entire thrust of the verse.

Mt. 5:42 is favored over Lk. 6:30 by Marriott for reasoning similar to the favoring of Mt. 5:39b, c over Lk. 6:29a, above. Lk. repeats a phrase--ἀπό τοῦ αἵροντος

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 110.

⁵⁹Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 239.

⁶⁰Marriott, p. 110.

(from the one taking)--while Mt. appears to be including new material.⁶¹

It strikes me as premature for Marriott to dismiss the adjective δεξιάν (right) above because he usually seems so thorough. However, he is not alone in preferring the Matthean wording over Lk.⁶² Therefore, it would seem appropriate to look at both passages separately--beginning with Lk.

Lk. 6:29-30. The meaning here revolves around response to an act of aggression. Arndt gives a very involved discussion on the principles that Jesus is expounding in these two verses. A brief summary might prove useful: Arndt believes Jesus is not addressing public or national issues--he is speaking of individual action; secondly, Jesus is prohibiting revenge; third, the principle 'only good can ultimately conquer evil' is explained; fourth, and perhaps centrally, love is always the dictating factor; fifth, Jesus is describing a principle--not a prescribed set of rules; and, finally, the attitude here is one of unselfishness.⁶³

Norval Goldenhuys emphasizes the application of the concept of love as the main thrust of Lk.'s message. What

⁶¹Ibid., p. 111.

⁶²See, Martin Dibelius, The Sermon on the Mount (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), pp. 53-4.

⁶³Arndt, pp. 193-4.

we have here, in fact, are "practical examples of the manner in which love must be practiced towards one's enemies."⁶⁴ He explains this further by stating that Jesus is not advising a "weak, complaisant attitude, which confirms the evildoers in their wickedness... [but that] ...even where severe measures have to be taken, this should be done only from motives of genuine love...the Christian...must be prepared to deny himself [herself] to the utmost and to place his [her] own interests completely in the background."⁶⁵

Ellis writes that v. 29 illuminates the principle of love and that "this principle of love fixes the nature and limits of one's response...although it does not exclude self-defense in the face of an assault."⁶⁶ Finally, William Manson suggests that Jesus was following the Suffering Servant motif prescribed in Deutero-Isaiah.⁶⁷

The reversal of the words 'cloak' and 'tunic' imply a case of robbery or personal violence;⁶⁸ this does not appear to be the case in Mt.

Concerning v. 30 we note the different word choice

⁶⁴Norval Geldenhuys, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 211.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 212.

⁶⁶E. Earle Ellis, The Gospel of Luke (Greenwood, S.C.: Attica Press, 1966), p. 115.

⁶⁷W. Manson, p. 69.

⁶⁸See, W. Manson, p. 68; or Arndt, p. 194.

from Mt.: δανίσασθαι μὴ ἀποστραφῆς (to borrow... reject) in the latter; αἴροντος...ἀπαίτει (taking...demand back) in Lk. Manson writes that "a Christian is not at liberty to turn a suppliant away, though the mind which requires love to be the principle of action prescribes also what love will devise."⁶⁹ Ellis agrees with the spirit of Manson's statement, and also with Arndt's last principle mentioned above, when he writes that Christ is not advocating perfunctory offerings to the poor. He enjoins a moral concern that will express itself in a spirit of self-denial in every encounter of life."⁷⁰

It would appear, therefore, that Lk. is using this passage as a general teaching about the need for 'active love' as opposed to revenge or violence. He does so by citing two extreme examples, turning the other cheek when struck and not objecting when being personally robbed, and then sums up the lesson by urging all to show kindness to those who have taken one's goods. In the latter case, commentators envision a beggar which is more true to the Matthean version. But, at any rate, the teaching would seem to be clear; commentators generally tend to shy away from the literalness and stress the principles involved. This would seem to fit the Lucan passage; the Matthean

⁶⁹W. Manson, p. 69.

⁷⁰Ellis, p. 115; see, also, Arndt, p. 194.

version, however, has received closer scrutiny.

Mt. 5:38-42. v. 38. This section begins as do the other antitheses, "You have heard..but I say to you..." However, Bultmann and Conzelmann doubt that this teaching was originally in antithetical form.⁷¹ Hence, we need to be aware that someone, perhaps the author(s) of Mt. took this teaching and clothed it in this form.

Otherwise, the critical aspect of this verse is the use and understanding of the 'lex talionis' (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:19-20; Deut. 19-21). As Albright and Mann point out, we usually think of this law as an example of the brutality of the Old Testament. But this is a total misunderstanding of the intent of the 'lex talionis', as I have recently learned. "It should be remembered that the law of retaliation here quoted by Jesus acted, in its own time and for many centuries afterwards, as a much needed check on the widely practiced blood feud."⁷² Morison takes this idea further:

the aim of the law...was not to sacrifice a second eye, but to save both. When a man [woman] in a passion understands that he [she] is liable to lose an eye if he [she] takes one, he [she] is likely, in the great majority of cases to be so far controlled as to save both. There is thus benevolence lying at the basis of this law.⁷³

⁷¹Bultmann, pp. 135-6; and Hans Conzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 119-20.

⁷²Albright & Mann, p. 68.

⁷³Morison, p. 80.

He goes on to write that the error lay in the rabbis not explaining to people that this law intended to eliminate revenge rather than perpetuate it.⁷⁴ Finally, it was also the purpose of this law to equalize punishment. That is, the rich also were subject to this law.⁷⁵ Lloyd-Jones agrees with this interpretation of equal justice⁷⁶ which was part of the Old Testament understanding of the 'lex talionis.'

It seems clear to me that Jesus was not intending to undercut this ancient commandment but clarify the real meaning--bring it to fulfillment.

v. 39. 39a offers an interesting problem. First, the translation of τῷ πονηρῷ has been hotly debated. The older versions have 'evil' or even 'the devil' but the meaning points more to 'evildoer' or an 'evil person.'⁷⁷ I think Hunter may be right when he writes that "what Jesus had in mind was personal wrong, malicious injury inflicted by a personal enemy."⁷⁸

A more daring problem is suggested by Tannehill, who believes 39a is a secondary insertion and does not

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 81.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), I, 216.

⁷⁷Morison, p. 81.

⁷⁸Hunter, p. 53.

belong to the rest of v. 39. He gives several reasons: it states a general principle while the rest are specific illustrations; 39a is in second-person plural, while 39b-42 are in second-person singular.⁷⁹ The importance of Tannehill's article will become clearer later; concerning this theory, it must remain only a possibility for other scholars have not mentioned it.

The remainder of my interest surrounding v. 39 focuses on the Matthean use of δεξιάν (right) which, I have already mentioned, is crucial to Jeremias' interpretation. Jeremias thinks Jesus is referring to a blow by the back of a hand on a person's right cheek which was a direct insult. "But then Jesus--and this is very important for an understanding of this matter--is not speaking of a simple insult, it is much more the case of a quite specific insulting blow: the blow given to the disciples of Jesus as heretics."⁸⁰

If we follow this reasoning, Jesus' point is not that one should be essentially non-violent, but that the disciples should expect persecution and are not to take

⁷⁹Robert C. Tannehill, "The Focal Instance as a Form of New Testament Speech: A Study of Mt. 5:39b-42," Journal of Religion, (October, 1970), 377.

⁸⁰Joachim Jeremias, The Sermon on the Mount (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 28; this is further discussed in Jeremias' New Testament Theology, pp. 239-240, in which he explains the absence of δεξιάν in the Lucan parallel.

revenge for it. Jeremias has to explain the remaining verses which are closely connected in a similar vein. To my satisfaction he does not. The idea is appealing and, I believe, more crucial than Tannehill's theory about 39a, but I am hesitant to side with Jeremias in view of the silence by other commentators.

vv. 40-42. Filson, including v. 39, believes that Jesus is giving five examples of how a disciple should react to "unfair or unreasonable treatment."⁸¹ In v. 40 we have a legal situation in which one is taking the tunic-- Jesus admonishes his hearers to let the person have her/his cloak (outer garment) too. In v. 41 the situation requires a certain knowledge of Roman governmental policy. The government had the right to force one to carry official mail or supplies, if necessary. Undoubtedly, this practice was subject to corruption and probably was hated by the Jews.⁸² Nevertheless, Jesus urged his hearers to go beyond the questionable practice. In v. 42, Jesus teaches that one should give freely and that one should not hesitate to loan.⁸³

Perrin raises the obvious question of practicality and decides that Jesus does not mean those literally but that Jesus is illustrating the principle that a person

⁸¹Filson, p. 89.

⁸²See, Filson, p. 89; or Morison, p. 82.

⁸³Albright and Mann, pp. 69-70.

"should respond to the challenge of God in terms of a radically new approach to the business of living...What the specifics of that new way are is not stated; these sayings are illustrations of the necessity for a new way rather than regulations for it."⁸⁴ There have been many other attempts at explaining this section: Rausch examines the implications for pacifism,⁸⁵ as does Lloyd-Jones.⁸⁶ Dibelius recognizes the hyperbolic nature of these sayings, yet, stresses the pure and absolute demands of the kingdom of God. Thus there is an eschatological element involved.⁸⁷ Hunter takes a more pragmatic approach to understanding these verses.⁸⁸

Before concluding this research section I want to look finally at the conclusions of Tannehill, whom I mentioned earlier. One reason I include his article here is that I find his work a very insightful attempt in trying to apply the teachings of Jesus to our own life.

Tannehill thinks this entire teaching is an example of what he calls the 'focal instance':

⁸⁴Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 148.

⁸⁵Jerome Rausch, "The Principle of Nonresistance and Love of Enemy in Mt. 5:38-42," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXVIII (January 1966), 31-41.

⁸⁶Lloyd-Jones, I, 273-279.

⁸⁷Dibelius, pp. 55-62.

⁸⁸Hunter, pp. 53-6.

The focal instance is characterized by (1) specifichness and (2) extremeness. Extremeness means that it stands in deliberate tension with ordinary human behavior. Specifichness means that there is a surprising narrowness of focus due to the desire to present an extreme instance.⁸⁹

Tannehill believes that there is a mode of language in the Synoptics which defies a practical interpretation without losing at least some of the original meaning of the text while the more obvious meaning appears ridiculous.⁹⁰

The applicability of the focal instance lies, not in its rigidity, but in its open-endedness:

It does not try to anticipate each new situation by encompassing it in a general rule...simple situations are chosen, and no complicating factors are introduced. This does not mean that focal instances are relevant only to simple situations. Rather, it means that this mode of language gives the hearer the freedom of responsible decision in light of particularities of his [her] situation.⁹¹

Tannehill draws a distinction between this concept and hyperbole. The latter "refers to things which are obviously impossible: a log in the eye or a camel passing through the eye of a needle. The focal instance stands at the edge of the possible...One can turn the other cheek."⁹² In connection with this, it is important to note that these verses go against our tendency as well as our desire to put our self first.⁹³

⁸⁹Tannehill, p. 380.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 378-380.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 382.

⁹²Ibid., p. 384.

⁹³Ibid., pp. 379-80.

I find this line of reasoning fascinating because he really comes to grips with the force of the text and yet is aware of the human need to make them applicable. The tension he observes between the message of Jesus and the human condition is not a spurious attempt to present a 'watered-down' Gospel but is, rather, a very real and constant dynamic. The danger of his method would seem to be the tendency of losing the force of the Gospel in a world where humans are all too infrequently not called beyond themselves.

Personal Comments and Conclusions. The first discovery I have made while doing this research was to learn the real intent of the 'lex talionis.' I have come from a superficial understanding of this law to a deeper, fuller grasp of what was really intended. If it is true that the objective was not to encourage revenge but curb it, we can more safely say that Jesus was not trying to annul the law but only recapture its real meaning.

The question of the parallel versions has been discussed; I have followed the Matthean version closer as it is understood to be the more correct.

One of the interesting issues revolves around the infamous 'turning of the cheek' saying. I think Jeremias is on the right track when he suggested the possibility that Jesus was concerned with the inevitable charge of

heresy that he knew would plague his followers. This insight has helped me gain a better grasp of the significance of the example. However, if we are going to dismiss this illustration because it seemingly does not apply to us then we need to consider the other illustrations literally, also. That is, I am willing to grant the possibility that Jesus, in v. 39b, "was thinking of later persecution"; but I do not see how that changes the overall thrust of the teaching for us. Jeremias' insight is particularly useful in overcoming an extreme literalism.

This, like the first antithesis studied earlier (and all the other antitheses for that matter) is a powerful, shocking thought. If we take v. 39a literally and as an isolated saying we will never lift a hand to combat evil-anywhere. Jesus' life does not reflect this attitude and I do not think that was his meaning. Likewise, I agree with Arndt that Jesus was not expounding a social ethic. The danger to over-generalize from this teaching has made it a much misunderstood-and misapplied-doctrine.

I think Jesus is stating, in the extreme, his opposition to revenge. He chose illustrations from various settings in order to clarify his opposition. From this I do not think we can draw conclusions about his attitude towards war or public protest. It simply is not present.

Many have tried to decipher a principle of active love from this passage--particularly the Lucan parallel.

Along with this some have suggested a reference to the Suffering Servant motif in Deutero-Isaiah. It is hard to disagree with such endeavors for most are quite noble and in the spirit of Christ, but they, too, press the anti-thesis too far.

The 'new way' that Perrin mentions is close to my understanding of a 'new righteousness' which is preached throughout the SM.

Tannehill's focal instance comes close to a real appreciation of the passage. While I do not see any reason why v. 39a has to be regarded as secondary I can, nonetheless, agree with the sense of interpretation he brings to the overall text.

As I mentioned in part I, there is a tension between the human condition and the Word of God. Tannehill recognizes this and tries hard to keep that tension real--practical--so that its impact can be felt in all of our life.

Again, as in the first antithesis we have a collision with human nature. The spirit of revenge is strong, it eats our insides and makes us vicious--if not overtly, at least covertly. Witness the ever-growing animosity between countries, the increasing arms-race. A close examination of terrorism and street-violence would surely betray a sickening spirit of revenge. Perhaps saddest of all, this also lies in each of us; we all participate in

some small way in this insidious disease.

Jesus wants to cut through this spiral; he wants to point us beyond our own understandings and beyond our own ego-centeredness to a Reality greater than all of life. He does this in a graphic saying; he does this in various illustrations. Jesus, as in Mt. 5:21-6, has found the key to human relationships and he strains to make the message existentially real.

I sense that this section and the first antithesis are not unrelated. Both are teachings on the importance of human relationships and how they can be properly maintained within the rubric of the 'new righteousness' the kingdom of heaven is now demanding.

I do not find in either of these passages a plea to suppress one's feelings, nor do I detect an attitude that 'whatever one feels is fine.'

I do find an exhortation to be present with one's own feelings, to act on them and to take positive action to make love the directing factor in all of one's relationships. We do not have a rule-book for accomplishing this order; we do have the command to strain for it and the inherent promise that God empowers those who strive after the kingdom of Heaven.

Now I shall turn to the field of psychology for a short study of anger and how it can be related to the findings in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV

RELEVANT PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

This chapter has as its main burden the coming to grips with what insights counseling can make in connection with both New Testament texts I have been studying. As I stated in my introduction I am not trying to cover all of psychology--or even any particular system--but rather to focus on several psychologists who have studied the problem of anger and to decide where--and if--they have any similarities with the New Testament texts.

This requires that I face some difficult questions. This I want to do openly and honestly without fear of the possible outcome. First, the question of applicability which was raised in chapter I. That is, how can we--in our own lives--apply Mt. 5:21-26, 38-42? Beyond this more specific questions arise: is Jesus telling us never to feel angry at someone? Are we likely to be condemned if we speak angrily to anyone? Are we to never act aggressively toward anyone? Are we to allow ourselves to be physically beaten rather than resist? Such questions--and their implications--are the concern of this chapter. All the research I have done into the psychological dimensions of anger are intended to be compared directly with the Biblical findings of chapter III. In other words, I

am studying the psychology of anger in light of the New Testament texts I have already examined.

Before I begin I want to clarify the words anger and aggression. Anthony Storr in a book about aggression has written a fairly complex and technical description of the emotion of anger.¹ Aggression is differentiated from anger by the fact that the former is a reaction or behavior response related to the emotion of anger. Therefore, anger is previous to the aggression.² Finally, in an effort to be fair to Storr, it should be stated that he takes the emotion of anger as a given; it is natural and unavoidable. Aggression, he decides, should accompany anger in some manner although he becomes quite flexible in describing ways aggression should be expressed.³ The other scholars I consulted have essentially agreed with these meanings.

Now I want to move into the literature on anger and its expression, aggression. I am going to highlight those aspects which I think will bear directly on my findings concerning Jesus' teachings on anger.

One interesting insight I have gained falls under the category of 'anger as self-hate.' Theodore Isaac Rubin has discussed ways anger, which is not appropriately

¹Anthony Storr, Human Aggression (New York: Bantam, 1968), pp. 12-15.

²Ibid., pp. 15-18.

³Ibid., pp. 16-22; 122-3.

expressed, becomes perverted anger and is expressed in inappropriate--if not dangerous--ways. He makes what I think are crucial observations when he writes that self-hate is a widespread occurrence in most people,⁴ and that pent-up anger is a prime motivating factor in many cases.⁵ Leo Madow has written similarly in describing various indirect expressions of anger which may take the form of depression, which is a way of taking it out on oneself.⁶

The point of this discussion on self-hate is that anger can become expressed toward the self--often when it is unjustified. This becomes clearer if anger, as Madow writes, "is considered as 'energy,' it cannot be destroyed (forgotten) but must be converted."⁷

A second insight that I think is important to my study is connected to the first insight. Rubin describes what he calls the "'nice-guy, don't make waves' syndrome"⁸ which refers to the person who refuses to show anger to anyone--particularly the people she/he dislikes the most.⁹

⁴Theodore Isaac Rubin, The Angry Book (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 69.

⁵Ibid., p. 72.

⁶Leo Madow, Anger (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 8.

⁷Ibid., p. 10.

⁸Rubin, p. 92.

⁹Ibid.

These are people who want peace at any price and who often pay an enormous price to get it. The price is often equal to complete self-effacement or destruction of self. They simply turn themselves into fragmented mirrors--reflecting what they think everyone else wants.¹⁰

Rubin calls this a phony peace because people are so afraid to be honest and to really communicate with each other lest the truth should become known and everyone turn angry.¹¹

It is crucial to bear in mind that Rubin is not writing that everyone who tries to be 'sweet' or 'keep the peace' is automatically being dishonest and/or harmful to her/himself. He is describing a condition that can result from cases of extreme passivity.

A third insight that I have discovered in my research is quite different from the first two insights. Madow has observed that a source of anger comes from the realization that we are no longer the center of the world. As we grow up we continually have to make room for others as we learn to care for them. But the resulting frustration at not having our way can lead to anger.¹² Madow cites further an illustration whereby a man who had become very angry at his wife for her refusal to make compromises in their marriage had to learn to cope with his anger and go beyond his own self-centeredness by making all the

¹⁰Ibid., p. 141.

¹¹Ibid., p. 142.

¹²Madow, p. 29.

changes in the relationship and thereby keep the marriage happy. Madow notes that the tendency to let anger keep us 'ego-centered' has to be resisted wherever possible.¹³

A further step concerning this ego-centeredness is delineated by Rubin who points out that anger is often a result of hurt pride. Those times in all of our lives when we become so engrossed in our own selves and are rudely shaken back to the reality of other people we may very well get angry. Rubin considers this inappropriate.¹⁴

A fourth insight has considerable support among the four scholars I read. Konrad Lorenz has an entire chapter devoted to a crucial overlap between the third and fourth insights. The fourth insight is self-knowledge of one's anger and aggression. The interesting point is that Lorenz does not defend the idea of self-knowledge as much as he advocates a desperate need for humility in allowing oneself to become aware of her/his emotions or behavior. "Humanity defends its own self-esteem with all its might, and it is certainly time to preach humility and to try seriously to break down all obstructions to human self-knowledge."¹⁵

Writing specifically about this self-knowledge, Rubin says that the important thing is to know and to accept

¹³ Ibid., pp. 123-4.

¹⁴ Rubin, pp. 177-9.

¹⁵ Konrad Lorenz, On Aggression (New York: Bantam, 1963), p. 216.

angry feelings.¹⁶ Madow, in his last chapter, lists and discusses at length appropriate steps in coping with anger. The first step he mentions is "to recognize that you are angry and admit it to yourself. Anger of which we are aware is much less harmful than unrecognized or unadmitted anger."¹⁷

The fifth insight, too, stems from the previous insight but not in the manner one might first suspect. Although both Madow and Rubin emphasize recognition of one's anger (self-awareness) neither advocate free or full expression as the next step in dealing with it. Madow writes simply that often "open expression of anger will not solve the problem."¹⁸ Rubin is more profound when he writes that "acceptance of feelings plus freedom to express those feelings gives one the chance to decide (choice) whether one wishes or does not wish to express those feelings."¹⁹ He then shares an illustration of someone who became aware of her feelings and found she did not need to express the anger.²⁰ The fifth insight, then, has to do with being able to choose what to do with one's anger.

¹⁶Rubin, p. 165.

¹⁷Madow, p. 107.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 107; 115.

¹⁹Rubin, p. 165.

²⁰Ibid., p. 166.

The sixth insight is the most important so far; it has to do with the distinctions between various expressions of anger. One of the best discussions is given by Rubin when he distinguishes between 'cold anger' and 'warm anger.' He conceives of warm anger as

open, direct, and easy to understand. ...its principal purpose is to communicate how one feels and to make the other person aware of a need for greater understanding...there is little or no evidence of vindictiveness, sadism, or vengeful purpose... it does not include sarcastic biting, tearing and stabbing.²¹

Cold anger, on the other hand, does not lead to greater understanding. Its purpose is "too often vindictive triumph and the creation of sadistic pain."²² While Rubin is concerned primarily with verbal expression it is worthy to note that he makes the excellent point that silence can be a destructive weapon in expressing anger. The intention of 'angry silence' is most often total frustration of someone and not a better relationship.²³

In other contexts Rubin makes similar differentiations. For instance, he writes that "anger is not the same as sustained hostility and hatred."²⁴ More to the point, he sees a difference between expressing one's displeasure

²¹Ibid., pp. 183-4.

²²Ibid., p. 185.

²³Ibid., pp. 82-3.

²⁴Ibid., p. 205.

and attempting to hurt someone.²⁵ These differences appear to line up on the side of warm anger and cold anger respectively.

Lorenz seems to be in agreement with Rubin although he uses different phrases. He sees a need for adequate discharge of aggression that is not hostile or harmful.²⁶

It would seem then, that the fifth insight advises us not to express anger indiscriminately and the sixth insight notes the important distinction between 'harmful' aggression and aggression intended to enhance a relationship or a situation. The seventh insight goes yet another step and recognizes the possibility of control over one's anger.

Madow points to this aspect in his fourth step in coping with anger which he calls dealing with anger realistically."²⁷ For him this essentially means determining if "the anger is...greater than the situation calls for."²⁸ The implication is that one should have some control over her/his expression of anger.

Rubin is more explicit in recognizing one's ability to control anger:

People can and do get mildly, moderately, and even intensely angry without loss of control. Actually

²⁵Ibid., p. 217.

²⁶Lorenz, pp. 234-5; 271.

²⁷Madow, p. 115.

²⁸Ibid., p. 117.

the greater their awareness insight number four --that is, the closer they are to what they really feel--the less chance there is to lose control... When we know what we feel, when our feelings are integrated as parts of the whole of us, then regardless of their intensity, we remain completely in charge of ourselves and of all of our feelings--as part of a central autonomy.²⁹

Lorenz realizes the element of control is important for he asserts that the problem with the expression of anger in our society is that we cannot properly control what we feel.³⁰

The eighth, and last, insight has a crucial role in my investigation too. It concerns the importance of human relationships and the function of love in the understanding of aggression--or the expression of anger. Lorenz, of all improbable people because of his scientific, objective biases, repeatedly makes the point that along with the drive of aggression there is also the drive of love which finds its greatest expression in interpersonal relationships.³¹ He carries this further by stating that "every kind of brotherly [sisterly] feeling for the people to be attacked, constitutes a strong obstacle to aggression."³²

Rubin spells this out in different terms. First of all he recognizes that love and anger are not mutually

²⁹Rubin, p. 169.

³⁰Lorenz, pp. 214-5.

³¹Ibid., pp. 240-4.

³²Ibid., p. 273; see, also, p. 276.

exclusive. In fact, "we are more likely to get angry at people with whom we relate than those we have nothing to do with."³³ However, we need to be aware of the difference between the expression of anger and this love. When Lorenz writes that love is an obstacle to aggression he means destructive, hostile aggression. Rubin is cognizant of the fact that we get angry at those who have meaning for us but he also insists that warm anger is the proper response if we are in touch with the love-aspect. "The expression of warm anger will have a cleansing effect on the relationship ...angry responses in the future will probably be reduced in frequency and intensity. There will be increased confidence and closeness in the relationship."³⁴ Cold anger is, in the end, "the antithesis and enemy of love."³⁵

Madow is closely akin to the overall thrust of this idea when he insists that increased communication is one of the best ways to deal with anger.³⁶

This last insight suggests very strongly that one's expression of anger is more likely to be hostile, bitter--cold--if the element of love is lacking in the relationship. Conversely, if a relationship exists which is

³³Rubin, p. 168.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 184-5.

³⁵Ibid., p. 186.

³⁶Madow., p. 117.

characterized by love and goodwill the expression of anger will, most likely, be less hostile, less bitter and probably less frequent.

Having illuminated eight psychological insights or principles I want to examine them in light of Jesus' teaching on anger from the Sermon on the Mount.

In applying these insights to the passages I have selected I want to emphasize that what I am attempting is to derive possible applications of these passages. The psychological insights are intended as suggestions in arriving at possible meanings.

The first two insights raise questions in my mind concerning the meaning of Jesus' words in Mt. 5:22, 38-9. In connection with the insight which points toward possible self-hate as the result of unexpressed anger the question is, would it be consistent with Jesus' teachings to expect him to advocate or encourage a practice that would result in self-hate? In the same vein, would Jesus have wanted his hearers to become 'peace-at-any-price' followers? If, indeed, we understand Jesus' command to 'be not angry' or his command to 'turn the other cheek' as literal prohibitions of either natural feelings or the instinct of self-preservation then we have to answer the two questions above. Jesus certainly did not encourage self-hate nor did he practice complete passivity in the face of evil.

This is a good place to make the statement that I do

not want to impinge psychological analysis on Jesus' own rationale for certain teachings. We have to accept the fact that Jesus did not have the benefit of modern science, psychology or literary-analysis. Therefore, I do not feel inclined to apologize for his lack of scientific knowledge. But I do think it is fair to examine his teachings in light of what we know now, in order to determine the degree of compatibility between the two. Hence, as I reflect on the first two insights of this chapter and my earlier findings I can understand that Jesus was not advocating we never get angry--or never resist an evildoer.

The third insight strengthens my conviction that Jesus was indeed on the right track when he spoke against human pride. I mentioned in chapter III that Jesus was trying to drive us beyond ourselves in Mt. 5:22. I think that the research on psychology has reinforced the essential correctness of this concept. However, I do not think the third insight goes as far as does Jesus nor do I detect the power behind the words--the conviction that this is a central point--that Jesus' teaching portrays.

I think the fourth insight is in basic agreement with my findings that Jesus was interested in raising people's awareness of the emotion of anger--and its possible destructiveness.

The fifth insight--that one can decide whether or not to express anger--is inherent in both antitheses in Matthew.

The important distinction I noted between cold anger and warm anger, or hostility and non-hostile aggression in the sixth insight does not fit so easily with what Jesus had to say. Yet, let us examine more closely. It was noted that the terms (empty-head) and (fool) were strong expressions--some commentators even suggested that they were meant to show contempt and scorn. If there is any truth to this observation it would follow that Jesus was condemning what Rubin classified as 'cold anger.'

There is no reason to push Jesus' intent too far; I was critical of those who read their own thoughts into his words and I do not want to be guilty of the same now. Further, I do not think it is fair--or even intelligent--to ask if Jesus could have been aware of such distinctions as 'cold' and 'warm' aggression. We do not need to ask that question for the passage to make sense to us. I do believe the insight helps clarify Jesus' meaning for us today. I would never say Jesus meant such a distinction, only, that it helps throw light on a profound teaching of Jesus which, otherwise, is not as clear to our minds.

The seventh insight--that people actually can control anger--is also evident in what Jesus assumes about people. Jesus went beyond merely noting this fact; he fully expected it.

The last insight appeals to Mt. 5:23-4, 38-42 in that it outlines the value and importance of love and

relationships of love. It was shown that Jesus had great respect and trust in human relationships--they were for him a priority. He expected people to treat them and trust them with the same respect and sense of expectation. It is little wonder, then, that it should be proven by psychology that valuable human relationships and the element of love can actually mitigate against strong anger which results in disaster. This may also explain why Jesus took such a strong position against anger--because he knew how anger between friends, if not attended to, could rapidly snowball into violence.

I have tried to show that Jesus' teaching on anger and retaliation are not, necessarily, in conflict with psychology. It may be true that some psychologists would reject the teachings of Jesus; New Testament scholars could disagree with my conclusions concerning the teachings themselves. That is not the point. The point is that I have attempted to do a fair and complete exegesis, a fair and objective analysis of the representative literature on anger, and a thorough comparison without pushing either discipline into questionable positions. I now want to conclude with a sermon constructed from the research, findings, comparisons and other insights I have discovered throughout the course of this project.

CHAPTER V

SERMON

"A Christian Way of Handling Anger"

When was the last time you were angry--really mad? A long time ago? Or, have there been times lately you may have overlooked? How about this morning when you heard the alarm and realized it was time to get up? Maybe it was this morning when you remembered you had a committment to go to church--and didn't really feel like it.

Whether it was today or yesterday or last Wednesday we all have gotten upset, frustrated, angry--even enraged--in the past week. Anger is just as common as grouchiness in the morning, or as natural as yawning when tired. But, unfortunately, we don't handle our anger very well, and, too often, it gets us into trouble--and we end up feeling guilty, or, even more angry.

Today, I want to talk about how our Christian faith can help us keep anger from destroying our relationships with others and with God. (thesis statement).

Part of the reason anger is such a complicated issue is the many different ways people deal with it. Some of us blow up at anything and everything which hits us wrong. A misplaced wrench, being ten minutes late for church (maybe for some ten minutes early), discovering that our son or

daughter accidentally broke the good china dish, or, perhaps leaving our parents in charge of our stereo only to find the needle missing later. Two or three such catastrophes at one time would undoubtedly upset most of us but some of us would be more likely to 'lose our cool' at any one incident. Some of us are slaves to our anger.

Another way of dealing with anger which is more subtle but equally as destructive is to never admit to anger. Never. There are some people who, no matter what fate may befall them, will categorically deny that they are mad. Now, some people don't get mad often--they are indeed fortunate--but the person who refuses to admit her/his anger is just as apt to end up with a bad headache as the person who is constantly yelling.

I suspect that most of us are somewhere in between. Sometimes we get angry too quickly. More often, though, we tend to hide our anger, hoping it will go away before it gets us into trouble. The strange thing about anger is that it won't go away. It tends to hang around whether we know it or not, and if we aren't honest with ourselves it can build up and burst out at unsuspected--and inopportune--times. Then, we feel worse than ever and end up taking it out on ourselves for being so stupid as to lose our temper.

As a Christian community, we hear yet another word on anger. This word doesn't come from a counseling session

or from the latest laboratory tests on angry rats. It comes, instead, from the highest authority we have, the word of God, the Holy Bible. In the fifth chapter of Matthew we read that Jesus has quoted an old law condemning murder. But he goes a step further and calls anger into question. His point--and it is stated in a few, powerful words--is that we do not really realize the destructive effect harsh words can have.

Later in that chapter, Jesus admonishes his hearers to 'turn the other cheek'. Here, he was speaking to that aspect in each of us which, when wronged, becomes enraged and wants to seek 'double revenge'. Jesus asserts that retaliation, getting even, is no way to further the cause of love. While our first inclination when wronged is to get mad and attack the softest and most sensitive spot on our adversary, Jesus says, No! No! Love is greater than revenge, love is greater than personal anger! The love of God available to you can conquer your own personal anger against a fellow human being.

Jesus also spells out the consequences of anger that is not tempered by love. Anger can lead to separation and alienation. We become alienated from ourselves when we act foolishly or hastily on an angry impulse. We separate ourselves from others by letting our anger create tension with those whom we care about--and need. And, finally, we alienate ourselves from God by losing touch with the Gift

of Grace which is love and understanding. Anger--and the way we express it--can lead to alienation and separation; hence, the need for a Christian way of handling anger.

I want to state four practical steps in dealing with those times when we get upset, irritated, or even stark raving mad. These steps are based on the teaching of Jesus and on what a Christian response to angry situations would look like. I should also like to call upon the insights of a couple of prominent psychologists whose thoughts coincide with Christianity on this point.

The first step is suggested by Dr. Leo Madow who says, we should recognize that we are angry, admit it. This recognition is also made by Jesus in the fact that he calls our attention to the anger behind the violent act. Recognize you are angry. Don't deny it. Don't hide it. Don't cover it up with rosy, dishonest phrases. Admit it: I am angry!!! Not, 'well I guess I may be a little upset,' when you are actually so mad you can't see straight. Anger that isn't recognized can't be controlled.

The second step according to Dr. Madow is to determine the cause of our anger. That is, why are we angry? At what? Whom? What is (are) the real target(s) of our anger?

The third step is perhaps the most crucial. We have to determine ways of expressing our anger that will not make things worse--but better. The two expressions

Jesus chose were considered to be quite derogatory--Jesus knew the effects of slashing, cutting words. Dr. Theodore Isaac Rubin has made an interesting, and helpful, distinction between what he calls 'warm anger' and 'cold anger!' Warm anger is the frank admittance that one is angry. One may express oneself forcefully but not in a biting, hurting way. 'Cold anger' is the expression of anger which actually hopes to hurt or cut-down someone. Another way of seeing this distinction is to note the difference between openly and honestly voicing one's displeasure as opposed to attacking someone with malicious words. Stop and consider the times you have been angry and the ways you expressed your anger. Was your anger warm or was it cold--were you lashing out bitterly and trying to hurt someone? When the kids forgot to clean-up the mess they had made in the living room, did you yell at them and call them 'irresponsible little punks' who never do anything to help around the house? Or, did you say, forcefully and clearly, how angry it makes you when you have expected something to be done and it isn't? There is a difference.

Or, how about your response to a friend who said the wrong thing and got you in trouble? Did you promptly tell her/him what a rotten friend she/he is and that you would never do anything like that--get lost? Or, in the same vein, maybe you threw a big chunk of silence at them--ignored them purposefully, hoping it would really aggravate

them. That would be a 'cold' response. However, a warm response might mean that as soon as possible you would tell your friend that you felt hurt, that you were mad and that you didn't really know what to do. Then, wait for a response rather than stomp off angrily. You see, there is a qualitative difference in our expressions of anger. This difference changes the entire tone and direction which our anger is taking us.

A further consideration of this distinction brings us right to the heart of Jesus' teaching on anger. Rubin states that 'warm' anger can actually enhance a relationship--that people who are free to get mad and let the other know of their anger are more likely to be able to express love and caring for each other. But, 'cold' anger isolates people. It is like driving a wedge between two friends. Too often this sort of anger never gets resolved--it hangs on and on and is always in our memories--and hearts. But, Jesus said 'make friends quickly--drop everything--and go get right with your neighbor.'

The fourth, and last, step comes directly from Jesus' teaching. We are called to go beyond our own selfish anger and to get in touch with the love of God that is waiting for each of us. This is what we are ultimately called to share with each other--not our anger and gripes, though they, too, have to be cleared up. But we are finally called to share the news that God--in Christ--has come to set us

free--to liberate us--from our own bondage--and to love each other in ways that go far beyond the strife of living. Jesus knew this was hard. He didn't expect us to be saints, to never get angry, or to never express it. But he did expect us to give our anger to God, to recognize at all times--even angry times--that the love of God which surrounds us daily is present and can enable us to control and utilize our angry energy for better human relationships and a closer, deeper relationship with God.

I have stated this morning that we need to understand how anger functions in our own life and how our Christian faith can help us keep anger from destroying our relationship with others and our relationship with God.

I have said that Jesus did not teach us to never be angry or never to resist evil but to overcome the emotion of anger and retaliation with love.

I suggested four steps in dealing with anger. First, we need to recognize when we are angry and admit it to ourselves. Secondly, we need to determine exactly why we are angry. Third, we have to discover ways of expressing anger so that we do not lash out in hostile ways but actually help a relationship by using the anger constructively. Finally, we need to trust that the power and love of God can take us beyond our own anger and allow us to share--not only angry times--but, more often, the love of God that we find in Christ.

I'm mad God. I am honest to goodness angry.
 I'm mad at the kids
 I'm mad at my parents.
 And I'd like to punch my neighbor in the nose.
 But I always take it out on the wrong people.
 In the wrong way.
 Then I'm sorry. Too late.
 What can I do with my anger, Lord?
 It eats at me--it comes, it goes.
 I may think its gone--but its still here.
 Oh God.....am I angry at myself?
 am I angry at you?
 For the things I see in life that I don't like?
 Let me be angry God. Let me be stark-raving furious.
 But keep my anger from hurting those I love
 Those I care about.
 Help me be angry God, but not hostile.
 And then, then God, send me calm spirit,
 Send me a cool peace to soothe my angry bones.
 Create out of my anger a more healthy love.
 Use my confused, mixed-up, anger to bring lasting
 Wholeness to those I touch.
 It's my anger, Lord. But it's Your love.
 And Love is stronger.
 May Your Love be stronger in me.
 Amen.

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